

Appl. No. 10/679,968
Amdt. dated August 2, 2004
Reply to Office Action of May 20, 2004

REMARKS

In the aforesaid Office communication, each of the claims in the application was rejected under Section 102 as being fully anticipated by the patent to Campbell, et al. In a review of the Campbell reference, as well as the other references cited by the Examiner, it was noted the present invention relates to a method that is quite distinct from what is disclosed in the cited prior art and the claims have been amended to more clearly distinguish the present method from the prior art.

It is first of all noted in the Campbell reference utilized by the Examiner in the rejection of the claims that a panel having upstanding flanges and a central portion is disclosed wherein the upstanding flanges are formed by punching holes in laterally extending zones of a strip of material and double folding these zones so that the apertures become open apertures along the edge of the flanges. A channel shaped strip so formed is then corrugated into straight line segments by folding the panel into a series of straight line segments. It is important to note in the method disclosed in the Campbell patent that the resulting product has only open apertures along the edges of its flanges and the panel is folded into straight line segments as opposed to having a curvature.

The patent to Kelm, et al. discloses a method of fabricating sheet metal panels into an article wherein the panel is perforated to provide a plurality of holes, but as in the Campbell, et al. patent, a shoulder is formed in the panel centered on the holes so that they become open apertures and the shoulder is of double thickness. The reference is of interest in showing that the product is curved as opposed to having straight line segments as in the Campbell, et al. reference.

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The patent to Leek, et al. discloses a method for forming a flanged sheet metal product that is not curved, but does have upstanding side flanges with open apertures along the edge thereof. Again, there are no closed apertures in the side flanges and the product is not curved as in the present invention.

In the present invention, a method of providing stress relief in an elongated longitudinally curved panel having a central portion and at least one upstanding longitudinally extending side flange includes the steps of forming closed apertures fully within longitudinal zones of an elongated panel of material, bending the zones relative to the central portion of the panel so that the apertures in the zone remain closed and finally curving the panel longitudinally. Claim 1 has been amended to clearly include these steps which as will be appreciated from the above description of the cited art, are not shown or suggested in the prior art. In other words, none of the prior art references disclose a method wherein closed apertures are formed in zones of a strip material which are bent relative to a central portion of the strip so that the apertures remain closed and finally curving the panel longitudinally. The only reference that discloses longitudinally curving a panel, the Kelm et al. patent, includes only open apertures in a folded zone and, accordingly, it is not felt the prior art discloses or suggests a method as now set forth in amended claim 1. Claim 4 has been canceled, but claims 2, 3 and 5 through 12 are dependant upon Claim 1 and felt to be allowable for the same reason. In addition, Claim 5 includes a step of further providing some open apertures in the bent zone and obviously, the prior art cited is void of a curved panel having upstanding flanges with both open and closed apertures inasmuch as none of the prior art references shows closed apertures in a bent zone. Claim 6 is directed to closed

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apertures of specified shape, Claim 11 includes the step of forming the apertures in a plurality of laterally-extending columns spaced apart along the length of the zone and Claim 12 states that the panel is formed with zones that are bent relative to the central portion into a single layer. These features are felt to further distinguish the method of the present invention from the prior art.

Inasmuch as there have been no other objections or rejections of the application and the claims as now amended are felt to clearly patentably distinguish the present invention from the prior art, it is felt the application is in condition for allowance and such action is courteously requested.

Dated this 2 day of August, 2004.

Respectfully submitted,


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